Lawmakers Call for FDA to Revis	e Blood Donation Policy
policies haven't kept up," said Re	securing our blood supply safe over the past 20 years, but our ep. Farr. "My hope is that the ACBSA meeting will begin the ace to this outdated, discriminatory policy."
stressed the importance of adjus The same policy allows heterose	s over the summer months, and blood advocacy groups have ting the existing policy, which has been in place since 1985. xual men and women who have had sexual contact with an d after only a one-year waiting period.
time that it, too, evolved," said Co on blood donation, we have an o	tion have advanced since the inception of this policy, and it's ongressman Mike Quigley (D-III.). "By adjusting our restrictions pportunity to demonstrate our commitment to equality and offer transfusions much-needed help."
and Jerrold Nadler (D-N.Y.) as w including Joe Solmonese from th Blood Centers, Cornelius Baker f	ned at the press conference by Reps. Anthony Weiner (D-N.Y.) ell as representatives from a range of advocacy groups e Human Rights Campaign, Celso Bianco from America's from the National Black Gay Man's Advocacy Coalition, Brian a Crisis and Laurie Young from the National Gay and Lesbian

Lawmakers Call for FDA to Revise Blood Donation Policy
Congressman Farr joined a group of more than 40 Representatives and Senators in sending a bi-cameral letter to FDA encouraging the revision of its blood donor policy. The Advisory Committee on Blood Safety and Availability will hear testimony from FDA officials on June 10-11 at The Universities at Shady Grove in Rockville, Maryland. The meeting will focus on key questions regarding the current FDA policy and will seek to determine if the policy should be revised.
"I'm pleased that the Department of Health and Human Services is meeting this week to address the ban on gay Americans donating blood," said Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.). "The medical and scientific communities have been crystal clear that there is no longer any scientific evidence to warrant a lifetime ban."
Among the many organizations calling for a revision of the discriminatory FDA policy are the American Red Cross, America's Blood Centers, and the American Medical Association. These organizations have stated that the exclusion of homosexuals from the national community of blood donors is "medically and scientifically unwarranted."
Text of the bi-cameral letter is below:

Lawmakers Call for FDA to Revise Blood Donation Policy

We are writing to express our support for your upcoming meeting of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Advisory Committee on Blood Safety and Availability on June 10th and 11th to review the Federal policy that prohibits men who have had sex with other men (MSM) from ever donating blood. We join with medical experts at the American Red Cross, America's Blood Centers, AABB, and the American Medical Association, among others, in calling for a change in policy that better reflects the science of high risk behavior for HIV. The time has clearly come to review and modify this policy to strengthen the safety of the blood supply and remove any needless discriminatory rules from the process.

In the wake of the major blood donor organizations stating that the lifetime ban on MSM blood donors is "medically and scientifically unwarranted," we urge you to utilize the most up to date and comprehensive medical and scientific data regarding high risk behaviors in your considerations. In order to improve the integrity of the blood supply, we believe it is imperative that all high risk behaviors be appropriately targeted in the screening process and that similar deferral periods are established for similar risks.

As the policy currently stands, a number of potential oversights and medically unjustifiable double standards seem apparent. For instance, there is no prescribed consideration of safer sex practices, individuals who routinely practice unsafe heterosexual sex face no deferral period at all while monogamous and married homosexual partners who practice safe sex are banned for life. In fact, a woman who has sexual relations with an HIV positive male is deferred for one year, while a man who has had sexual relations with another man, even a monogamous partner, is deferred for life. Even individuals who have paid prostitutes for heterosexual sex face a deferral period of one year while gay men face a lifetime ban. These do not strike us as scientifically sound conclusions.

The safety of our blood supply is of the utmost importance. With the advances in medicine over the course of the last three decades, we encourage you to look beyond blanket deferrals and consider screening based on real high risk behavior so we can update our blood donation policies from their early 1980's origins. By keeping discriminatory policies on the books, and denying willing donors the opportunity to help others we put the integrity of the blood donation system at risk.
Thank you for your consideration of these concerns. We look forward to the Committee's recommendations for modifying this policy.
Sincerely,
Sen. John F. Kerry
Sen. Jeff Bingaman
Sen. Roland W. Burris

Sen. Sherrod Brown
Sen. Maria Cantwell
Sen. Robert P. Casey
Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand
Sen. Russ Feingold
Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse
Rep. Mike Quigley
Rep. Tammy Baldwin
Rep. Shelley Berkley
Rep. Lois Capps
Rep. Michael Capuano

Rep. Judy Chu
Rep. Joseph Crowley
Rep. Susan Davis
Rep. Diana DeGette
Rep. Sam Farr
Rep. Barney Frank
Rep. John Garamendi
Rep. Raul Grijalva
Rep. Luis Gutierrez
Rep. Alcee Hastings
Rep. Maurice D. Hinchey

Rep. Rush Holt
Rep. Mike Honda
Rep. Hank Johnson
Rep. Barbara Lee
Rep. Carolyn B. Maloney
Rep. Ed Markey
Rep. Gwen Moore
Rep. Jim Moran
Rep. Jerrold Nadler
Rep. John Olver
Rep. Chellie Pingree Rep. Jared Polis
Rep. Steven Rothman

Rep. Jan Schakowsky
Rep. Jose E. Serrano
Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Rep. Anthony Weiner
Rep. Lynn Woolsey
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